

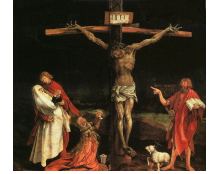
Predestination

Luther's Heidelberg Disputation



The Theology of **glory** vs The Theology the **cross**

Faith in man vs. **Faith in God**



Thesis 1-12 – Formulating the Cross (The Problem of Good works)

Review:

The Law is Good but in Some Ways Useless

Statement 1: The Law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance humans on their way to righteousness, but rather, **hinders** them.

Statement 2: Much less can human works, which are done over and over again with the aid of natural precepts, so to speak, lead to that end.

You and God are not What You Seem

Statement 3: Although the works of man always seem attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins. (*The Glory story*)

Statement 4: Although the works of God are always unattractive and appear evil, they are nevertheless really eternal merits. (*The Cross Story*)

Different Types of Good and Evil

Statement 5: The good works of men are thus not sins as though they were crimes.

Statement 6: The works of God (which he works in man – ie humility and fear and love) are thus not merits as though they were sinless.

Faith is he Fear of the Lord

Statement 7: The works of the righteous (by faith) would indeed be mortal (damning) sins if they would not be feared as mortal (damning) sins by the righteous themselves, out of pious (faithful) fear of God.

“Christian perfection is found in the inclinations of the heart, the profound fear of God, and in strong faith.” - The Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Art. XVI, 9

Statement 8: By so much more are the works of man mortal sins when they are done without fear and in unadulterated, evil self-security.

Real Sin

Statement 9: To say that works without Christ are dead, but not mortal (damning), appears to constitute a perilous surrender of the fear of God.

Statement 10: Indeed, it is very difficult to see how a work can be dead and at the same time not a harmful and mortal sin.

The distinction between civil righteousness and the righteousness of faith is PARAMOUNT.

Real Faith

Statement 11: Arrogance cannot be avoided, or true hope be present, unless the judgment of condemnation is feared in every work.

Statement 12: In the sight of God sins are then truly venial (not damning) only when they are feared by men to be mortal (damning).

*What is left? **Nothing but naked trust.***

“Sins are truly forgivable when they are feared to be damning. ... This, of course, seems quite depressing to the inveterate theologian of glory (hint hint!) ... Yet we should not miss the new note that sounds out of the rubble of rejected human works. It is the note of real hope. *It is not possible*, Luther declares, *for **true hope** to be present unless the judgment of condemnation is feared in every work.* Every hope built on human work will prove untrue. But the hope that arises out of the ashes of the refining fire WILL NOT disappoint. That way, however, IS the way of the CROSS.

Theses 13-18

The Problem of the Will

→ From the *objective* (works) to the *subjective* (heart/"will") →

Can or will "the will" help or hinder the cause of salvation? Do we actually want to be saved?

- St. Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy – conclusion: "without the aid of grace, the will is bound and can do nothing to *merit* salvation." But what does that mean? What is the meaning of *grace alone*?

If we are overcome, captivated and saved by grace alone, can we still claim to play a part?

The theology of glory cannot accept the deep implications of "grace *alone*" and begins bargaining for a toe-hold:

(Forde) *"the will must at least be involved in **preparing** for the reception of grace.... The will must at least **desire** grace.... Looming in the background is the troublesome question of predestination. Unless we are to say that grace is given only to those secretly predestined to the limited atonement before the foundations of the world, (Calvin's error) must not then our wills have something to do with it?"*

Put another way: *Is there not way for us to discover the logic of the system? (The answer is no.)*

Medieval Rome: "Do what is in us...." It is this "little bit" of salvation by "preparatory willing" that Luther addresses now. *"Can we actually, by our own power, prepare to receive pure grace? Are we free to desire such a thing? Does not our desire to play a part in desiring salvation teach us that we do not desire pure salvation at all!? **Can the fallen human will "will" salvation by grace alone?**"*

Forde:

*When it is stated (as Scripture does) that we are saved by God's Divine Election, is not the protest always raised, "But we are not puppets, are we? If everything happens by God's will alone, how can He hold sinners responsible for their sins? I can't accept such a God." **Such a protest proves the point which it tries to dispute.** The theology of glory will always confess that it **cannot** and will not "will" God to be the God he has revealed himself to be.*

*This fallen, human will is therefore not "free" but "bound" to **itself**. It **MUST** say "no" to God's reality of pure grace because it wants to. It's "will" to be free is precisely a will to be free **from God**. From this "fallen" state, it cannot move itself. It "will" not. If salvation is to be possible, it must mean this stubborn will must be changed from the outside. To be specific, it must be **killed**. There must be a **death and resurrection**.*

The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth is the ultimate example of this: that we did not choose him (we chose to KILL him), but that he nonetheless chose us.

Then is there no "free will" at all? *"Luther says that if we are to use the term 'free will' at all, then we should limit it to our everyday freedom in those things that are **below** us, but not attempt to extend it to those things that are **above** us." We DO exercise "free choice" in that we go ahead and do what we please rather without inhibition. But all this makes no difference in **salvation**.f*

Forde:

"When we come up against God, the Living One, who is really and truly above us, we encounter a

*fundamentally different reality. The problem is that we can't stand the idea of someone actually being above us. We can't abide an **electing** God, a God who chooses us. We **will** not **will** it. Thus, regarding what is truly above us, our "will" is not free but bound. This binding is not forced upon us by anyone other than ourselves. Here at last we may glimpse the depths of our own fallenness: **We think salvation would be better if God let us make the decision to be saved ourselves.***

The Bound Will

Statement 13: Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and, as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits mortal sin.

Forde: "Since the fall, "free will" does not exist **in reality**. It is an empty name, a veil. It may have existed in the Garden, but no longer. **BECAUSE** of this, when the fallen will sets out to "do its best" (to help God with salvation, to prepare for salvation, or even to respond to salvation) it **will** only commit mortal sin, (primarily by attempting to add to the completed work of Christ.)

This is, **of course**, a might offensive idea. It is normal for humans to admit that we fall short of the goals we do our best to reach. But to think that it is the trying to reach the goals themselves that holds our deepest sins it outrageous.

(It was this thesis for which Luther was first threatened with excommunication by Rome, and this thesis which he replied was "the highest and most important issue of our entire cause.")

What is the meaning of this thesis? **It is to say that we are sinful.**

Forde: "This is not to say that we have no **will**. It is to say that the fallen will is captive to sin (pride, hubrous and self-interest,). It is **subject** to sin. It is free, but only in its ability to do evil (because that is all it **wants/wills** to do.) There is indeed a will – a horrendous, wicked one. It is the willing, center of our being. The problem is precisely that it is free in all the wrong ways. It is captive to itself, rather than to God. It does all the sin that it does because it **wills** to do so, and it **will** not do otherwise – even when faced with the Law and commands of God (**think tithing!**)

You are bound, chained, to what you want, anything but free to serve God according to his own Good and Gracious will.

Luther's Scripture: John 8:34-36 "Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin...But if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

St. Augustine from *Against Julian*: "Free will without grace has the power to do nothing but sin." "You call the will free, but in fact it is an enslaved will."

Even (and especially) in your greatest piety, the self seeks the self – not God.

From this, it follows quite naturally that when this bound will tries to do **its** best, it only commits deadly sin. "Doing our best" actually becomes our last sinful defense against the steadfast love and grace of Christ.

We can't stand the cross.

Damned by Works Alone

Statement 14: Free will, after the fall, has the power to do good **only** in a **passive** capacity. But it can **always** do evil in an **active** capacity.

Forde: *If we for a moment listen to the the statement, “we are to do what is in us,” then the question must also be asked, “what is in us?” We have to a large extent already answer that question: sin, and nothing but.*

Paul: “I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my members” (Rom 7:18) and “Wretch that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24)

BUT, *the human will, even as sheer evil, yet has the capacity for good when good **acts upon it** from the outside.(!)*

Philosophical Analogy: Water has the **passive** capacity to be heated, but cannot heat itself. It has no **active** capacity for heat.

Luther's Analogy/Example: Corpses have a **passive** capacity for life because they CAN be raised from the dead. But not of their own **active** power. Not even in the slightest. Not even in **preparation!** Not even **by doing their best**. The capacity is **strictly passive**. They require **active, DIVINE** power to intercede.

- Take this a step farther: *While we live we have no **active** power to raise the dead. YET, we constantly contain/will an **active** power to take life. We cannot **will** life in fact and in truth, but we can most certainly **will** death. This demonstrates the thesis wonderfully: **after the fall we only have an active capacity for evil.***

But the will is still there. And that means that the will **could** be turned from an evil will into a good will. The problem is that an evil will **will not** change itself. That would be “evil will suicide”! To be changed, it will have to be rescued from the outside by **radical, active** good. To be specific, the “evil will” will have to be killed, so that a “good will” can be granted resurrection.

From this point of view, the cross begins to be a strikingly beautiful horror.